United Nations S/PV.3921(Resumption)

Security Council

Fifty-third Year

Provisional

3921st Meeting

Friday, 28 August 1998, 3.15 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Türk	(Slovenia)
Members:	Bahrain	Mr. Buallay
	Brazil	Mr. Amorim
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	Costa Rica	Mr. Sáenz Biolley
	France	Mr. Thiebaud
	Gabon	Mr. Dangue Réwaka
	Gambia	Mr. Touray
	Japan	Mr. Konishi
	Kenya	Mrs. Odera
	Portugal	Mr. Monteiro
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Sweden	Mr. Dahlgren
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Richmond
	United States of America	Mr. Burleigh

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

98-85719 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

The meeting resumed at 3.20 p.m.

The President: It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution (S/1998/810) before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I shall first call on those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The international community is following with deep concern the situation that has arisen in recent weeks in the north of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, where large-scale fighting is continuing. Disregarding the aspirations of the Afghan people for the restoration of peace and the preservation of the integrity of the country, the Taliban have undertaken yet another attempt by force of arms to extend their control over the entire territory of Afghanistan. The will of the international community has thereby been ignored and its efforts to establish an inter-Afghan negotiating process brought to nought.

A new phase of the civil war is destabilizing the situation in the entire region of Central Asia and beyond it. It creates a direct threat to the southern borders of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Such a course is fraught with the most serious consequences for international peace and security. The military expansion of the Taliban movement in the northern region of Afghanistan is being carried out with direct external assistance and the involvement of military personnel in planning and logistical support for Taliban operations, as well as directly in military participation.

This support, rendered despite the repeated appeals of the Security Council and the Secretary-General for it to cease, only further fans the flames of dangerous military confrontation. Foreign interference in the Afghan conflict must cease. Attempts to conceal the truth about such interference or obliquely to justify it by references to the past history of Afghanistan are simply not understood by the international community.

The Russian Federation is deeply concerned over reports coming in from the territories seized by the Taliban about ethnic- and religious-based persecution, ethnically motivated acts of forced displacement of large segments of the population and violations of international conventions relating to the treatment of prisoners of war and of the rights of persons not involved in combat.

Russia is shocked at attacks on United Nations personnel in the territory controlled by the Taliban, including the killing of Afghan staff members of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme in Jalalabad, and the Military Adviser to the United Nations Special Mission in Kabul. We demand that the necessary investigation be carried out and that the Taliban enact necessary measures to ensure secure conditions for the activities of international staff which would enable them to return to Afghanistan in the near future and to continue their work there.

Russia strongly condemns the seizure by the Taliban forces of the Consulate-General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Mazar-e-Sharif and the abduction of the staff of the Consulate-General and other Iranian nationals. We join our voice to the calls for the immediate release of the Iranian nationals and their unimpeded and safe exit from the territory of Afghanistan.

Actions of this kind are further confirmation of the Taliban's total scorn for civilized standards of conduct and disrespect for the basic tenets of international law. They run counter to the age-old traditions and culture of the noble Afghan people.

We note with concern that the continuation of the Afghan conflict creates an environment conducive to international terrorism and to the illegal production of and trafficking in drugs.

In Afghanistan, particularly in the territories controlled by the Taliban, violations of basic human rights are continuing, particularly those of women and girls. We call upon all States to respect the cultural and historical legacy of Afghanistan and to use all their influence in the country to convince the Afghan side of the need to respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all its citizens.

Convinced that there can be no military solution to the Afghan conflict, the Russian Federation strongly supports efforts aimed at a political settlement in Afghanistan that responds to the interests of all Afghans. We support the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan and advocate the continued active role of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General in the settlement of the conflict.

Russian representatives have consistently pursued this policy in their contacts with the parties to the conflict, both with the northern alliance and with the Taliban. Our position is that such contacts should make the parties to the conflict aware that the expansion of controlled territories by military means will lead neither to a lasting peace in Afghanistan nor to international recognition of those who use such methods.

A comprehensive settlement of the conflict is possible only through establishing a government in Afghanistan that is made up of Afghans themselves and that balances the interests of all segments of the Afghan population, including the representatives of the major political and military forces. We are prepared to cooperate with such a government so that the Afghan economy can be quickly restored and peace and stability can be established in the region and in the country.

All these considerations have been reflected in the draft resolution to be adopted today by the Security Council. The draft resolution also contains guidelines that should help focus international efforts on the priorities of fostering a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan.

In conclusion, we should like to thank all those who have contributed to the reaching of agreement on the draft resolution, which reflects a consensus of the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): As a friendly neighbour of Afghanistan, China is deeply concerned about the latest developments in that country. The escalation of fighting has brought new suffering to the people of Afghanistan and has also jeopardized their national economy and security. We wish to express our deep sympathy and concern. We call upon the various factions in Afghanistan to reach a ceasefire immediately.

Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic country whose ethnic disputes have deep historical roots. This, in addition to the involvement of outside forces, has made the situation in Afghanistan even more complex. We believe that any military advance is but temporary. Both the history and the realities of Afghanistan have demonstrated that military means are not helpful to finding a solution. The resumption of negotiations among all the factions in Afghanistan, under United Nations auspices, is the only way to a solution of the conflict in Afghanistan.

China sincerely hopes that the various factions in Afghanistan will put their national interests and the interests of the Afghan people above everything else. We hope they will put aside their ethnic, religious and political differences and establish a broadly based, representative government so as to achieve peace and stability and rebuild their homes.

The Chinese delegation appreciates the mediation efforts made by Mr. Brahimi, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, and the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA). We support the United Nations in its continuing to play a central and leading role. After many years of war, the people of Afghanistan are longing for peace and stability.

The resolution of the question of Afghanistan, in the final analysis, rests with the Afghan people themselves. We hope that the international community will respect the choice of the people of Afghanistan. Any action by the Security Council should help push the various factions in Afghanistan to reopen negotiations and to seek solutions for achieving peace and stability at an early date.

On the basis of this principled position, the Chinese delegation participated in the consultations on the draft resolution before us. We wish to thank the sponsors for accepting the amendments made by the Chinese delegation. We will vote in favour of the draft resolution.

We hope that the various factions in Afghanistan will give a positive response to the appeal of the international community. At the same time, we also hope that the international community will make coordinated efforts to prevent arms and other war *matériel* from flowing into the hands of those factions, so as to create favourable external conditions for putting an end to the fighting within Afghanistan.

Mr. Monteiro (Portugal): The Presidency of the European Union has already stated the common views of its member States on this subject. Therefore, I will emphasize only certain elements of my country's position with regard to the situation in Afghanistan.

Since the Council last discussed the disturbing situation in Afghanistan on 16 April 1997, the political and humanitarian situation in the country has deteriorated further. The latest fighting and escalation of the conflict in Afghanistan clearly indicate that at least one of the parties is convinced that it is in a position to take over militarily the whole country.

In reality, the warring factions must recognize that the conflict cannot be settled on the battlefield. Any thought of a conclusive military victory by one party is an illusion. The past 20 years of war in Afghanistan lead us to believe that a military victory by one of the warring parties will not bring the fighting to an end.

Portugal stands for a political settlement in Afghanistan on the basis of the decisions of the General Assembly and Security Council, and for the preservation of the unity and territorial integrity of the country. We therefore call on all factions to agree to an immediate ceasefire and to enter into negotiations under United Nations auspices aimed at achieving a broadly representative Government acceptable to all Afghans.

With the recent escalation of fighting, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated further. I would like to express our deep concern at this tragic situation in which the Afghan people finds itself. Moreover, recent measures taken by the Taliban resulted in the evacuation of all United Nations humanitarian personnel. The humanitarian impact of the evacuation of humanitarian personnel could be disastrous.

My Government strongly condemns the attacks on United Nations personnel and urges the Taliban to fully investigate the recent attacks against two staff members of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, which resulted in the death of an Italian national.

Portugal strongly deplores the fact that foreign countries, instead of using their influence on the warring factions positively, continue to fuel the conflict with arms, personnel and logistical support. Although the enmity between the Afghan factions is deep, we are convinced that to a great extent it is foreign intervention that has prolonged the fighting. Like others, we call for an immediate end to such interference.

We remain deeply concerned with the reports of widespread violations of human rights in Afghanistan, in particular the continuing and intolerable discrimination imposed by the Taliban against women. All factions must understand that they are responsible not only for complying with humanitarian law, but also for respecting and implementing international human rights standards regarding each and every citizen in Afghanistan.

We are also particularly alarmed by the fact that the fighting and the polarization of forces is increasingly taking place along ethnic lines, thus making it more complicated to find a peaceful political solution. In this regard, we would like to express our concern over the reported capture by the Taliban of the Consulate-General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Mazar-e-Sharif and with the fate of the civilian population of the Hazarajat region.

Another two sources of grave concern are drug-trafficking and the continuing presence of terrorists and terrorist training camps in Afghanistan, both factors with far-reaching negative effects inside and outside Afghanistan. They constitute a serious threat to peace and security in the whole region. In fact, these completely intolerable and destabilizing practices represent global threats, and they must cease immediately.

In conclusion, we fully support the draft resolution before us, which we co-sponsor. We urge the Afghan factions to fully comply with it to put an end to the suffering of the Afghan people.

Mr. Richmond (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom shares the grave concerns expressed in the draft resolution before us today, which it has chosen to co-sponsor.

The recent fighting has only prolonged the suffering of the people of Afghanistan and, internationally, has threatened the peace and stability of the region. It has done nothing to achieve a lasting solution to the Afghan crisis. History, old and new, shows us that military conquest is not the answer. Only a political settlement, negotiated between the factions and accommodating the rights and interests of all Afghans, can achieve a durable peace. We therefore strongly support the demand that the Afghan factions stop fighting and enter urgently into negotiations, under United Nations auspices, aimed at creating a fully representative, broad-based government.

One particularly worrying aspect of the current situation is the increasingly ethnic nature of the conflict in Afghanistan. In that context, we share the concern of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy and others about the consequences of the latest fighting for the Hazara community. We urge all factions to ensure the safety of civilian communities, to refrain from any acts of indiscriminate violence and to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance.

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned by continuing reports of outside interference in the affairs of Afghanistan. All countries with an influence on the factions in Afghanistan should do more to promote the

cause of regional stability by using their influence to prevent the supply of arms and other military support and to encourage the parties to negotiate.

The crisis in Afghanistan has recently had a direct impact on the international community. The United Kingdom joins in the strong condemnation of the attacks on United Nations personnel, including in particular the incident in which an Italian adviser to the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA) was killed. We extend our condolences to the family and to the Italian Government. We also condemn the capture by the Taliban of the Iranian Consulate-General in Mazar-e-Sharif. We call upon all concerned, and especially the Taliban, to cooperate in investigating the incident in Kabul and in doing everything possible to ensure the safe return of the Iranian diplomats and other Iranian nationals who have been missing since the seizure of the Consulate.

Mr. Konishi (Japan): Japan shares the deep concern of its Asian neighbours and, indeed, of the international community, at the fighting that has continued to rage in Afghanistan for the better part of two decades. The recent escalation of fighting in northern Afghanistan between the Taliban and the various factions allied against it is particularly disturbing. The hostilities are causing additional hardship to the Afghan people, who have already endured unspeakable misery and loss, and pose a grave threat to the stability of the region, particularly as new waves of refugees flow into neighbouring countries.

This year alone, the Security Council has issued three presidential statements stressing that the conflict in Afghanistan cannot be resolved militarily and calling on all parties to cease their hostilities and engage in dialogue. Although Japan was encouraged that direct talks were convened in the context of the ulema meeting process, our optimism did not last long, and the Taliban have now renounced that process and since the beginning of this month have occupied the city of Mazar-e-Sharif and other northern cities, with the result that most Afghan territory is now under their control. These developments leave little doubt that the Taliban, or, for that matter, the other parties to the conflict, are not seriously interested in seeking a peaceful settlement to the conflict.

The draft resolution on which we are about to vote, and of which Japan is a sponsor, reflects the grave concern of the Security Council over the deteriorating situation on the ground. We would like to express our appreciation to the Russian Federation for its initiative in drafting this strong and unambiguous message, and we call upon all the Afghan parties to respond promptly to its demands.

While the United Nations plays the central role in international efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Afghan conflict, Japan also attaches great importance to the efforts of the Six plus Two group, which have the support and confidence of Ambassador Brahimi, the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Afghanistan. In particular, we welcome the agreement of the group, as contained in the talking points dated 3 March 1998, to strive to check the flow of arms and other supplies to the warring parties. That outside support has only prolonged and intensified the fighting. In this regard, my delegation believes that the importance of cooperation and trust among the members of the Six plus Two group cannot be overstated. We are therefore especially concerned by the seizure by the Taliban of the Consulate-General of Iran in Mazar-e-Sharif and the disappearance of members of its staff and other Iranian nationals in Afghanistan. Such actions threaten to destroy the relations of trust which have been so painstakingly developed within the group, of which Iran is a member. We earnestly hope that the missing persons will be released safely and promptly.

Japan strongly condemns and mourns the loss of Lieutenant-Colonel Carmine Calo, military adviser to the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA), as well as two local staff members of the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), all of whom were the victims of gunfire as they carried out their humanitarian and peaceful duties in Afghanistan. On behalf of the Government and people of Japan, I extend my sincere condolences to their families on their loss.

We are also alarmed by reports of air strikes against the city of Bamian on 13 August which, in addition to the human loss they might have caused, also raise the fear that the great Buddhist statue in that area, recognized as part of the world's cultural heritage, has been damaged.

The final point I wish to raise today is one that my delegation has made on previous occasions but which bears repeating. Lasting peace can be established in Afghanistan only through a political process which is accompanied by international reconstruction assistance. This must be a continuous, two-pronged approach. In the conviction that reconstruction assistance is an integral part of the peace process, Japan has decided to host the next meeting of the Afghanistan Support Group in Tokyo

next December, which will address the problems of delivering international assistance in a situation where hostilities continue.

The people of Afghanistan have for far too long been deprived of their right to live in peace and to pursue their livelihoods in a safe and secure environment. Japan will continue to vigorously support efforts to achieve a durable peace in Afghanistan through a comprehensive settlement of the conflict, so that a Government which represents and is supported by all ethnic groups can be established as soon as possible.

Mrs. Odera (Kenya): When we last discussed the situation in Afghanistan, my delegation expressed disappointment at the stalemate in the peace process and expressed the fear that the Taliban had determined that a military solution was the only way to resolve the many political, religious and cultural differences in Afghanistan. That determination has increased the already great suffering of the people of Afghanistan. The Security Council's calls for restraint and negotiation and its appeals for an end to all foreign involvement in the form of overt military and financial support, have fallen on deaf ears.

We meet again today under even more disturbing circumstances. The will to negotiate a peace has given way to an overwhelming need to impose a military solution on a political problem. This approach by the Taliban may seem successful in the short term, but history teaches us otherwise. Indeed, if the Taliban insist on a military approach these short-term gains will eventually unravel, leading to even more turmoil in the country and the region. This is a cause of great concern for us.

Kenya has joined in sponsoring the draft resolution before us because we believe that the Security Council must again convey a clear, unequivocal message to the combatants that the problem in Afghanistan has to be resolved by peaceful means, through negotiation, and not by military means. We are also fully aware that the flow of arms, money and other supplies into Afghanistan has definitely exacerbated the crisis in Afghanistan. Several attempts to address this problem have not been successful. Indeed, in his last report on Afghanistan, the Secretary-General noted that this increasing support had made the Taliban and the United Front believe that they could achieve their goals by force. This deep concern is well expressed in the preambular section of the draft resolution, which deplores the fact that despite repeated pleas by the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Secretary-General for a halt to the involvement of foreign military personnel and the supply of arms and ammunition to all parties in the conflict, such interference continues unabated. We strongly urge those involved to stop in the interests of long-lasting peace.

This military conflict and its attendant excesses has injured two officials of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA), claiming the life of one. We join in the strong condemnation of this terrible act and join the international community in calling upon the Taliban to investigate this crime. During this time of sorrow Kenya conveys its deepest condolences and most heartfelt sympathies to the family and friends of military adviser Lieutenant-Colonel Carmine Calo of Italy, and to Political Affairs Officer Eric Lavertu of France its best wishes for a quick recovery.

We share the disappointment expressed by others, that the Steering Committee adjourned without completing its work. We believe that the strategy the Secretary-General has laid out, and which was being implemented by Ambassador Brahimi and the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, is worth pursuing. UNSMA should not give up in frustration, and we encourage it to continue its efforts.

We support the Secretary-General's approach in encouraging the international community to speak with one voice regarding the road map that needs to be followed. We also think that UNSMA's idea of a step-by-step process in confidence-building is worth following up. In fact, the idea of convening a genuine Grand Assembly, or *Loya Jirgah*, to promote a political settlement may also need to be considered. We believe that the principles of national reconciliation it embodies are positive and would enhance a true process of healing and peace.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to thank the Russian delegation for coordinating negotiations on this draft resolution, which we will support. We hope that the combatants will this time take heed and listen to the unanimous voice of the international community.

Mr. Thiebaud (France) (*interpretation from French*): The situation in Afghanistan has greatly deteriorated in recent months; this is marked in particular by new fighting and by the unfolding of a major military offensive by the Taliban. France is particularly concerned at these developments, which run counter to the search for a lasting political settlement to a conflict that seriously threatens regional and international security and

that has caused serious, deep suffering for the civilian population.

The Security Council has already laid down the fundamental principles for a settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan, including in its resolution 1076 (1996). The Afghan parties must put an end to hostilities without delay and without preconditions, and must engage in true political dialogue aimed at achieving national reconciliation. Outside interference, especially in the form of arms supplies, must cease. The United Nations has a central role to play in settling the conflict.

It must be said that no progress can be discerned on any of these points, and that through their obstinacy the Taliban have greatly contributed to the failure to put in place a peaceful settlement of the conflict. This unfortunate fact must not make us indifferent; on the contrary, it must prompt us to do what we are doing today with the consideration of the draft resolution before us: to stand firm, which is the only way to preserve the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan in the long term.

France condemns the 21 August attack in Kabul against two United Nations staff members working with the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan. We urgently call upon the Taliban to investigate the circumstances of this heinous act and immediately to inform the United Nations of the results of that investigation. The name of Lieutenant-Colonel Carmine Calo of Italy, who was murdered in a cowardly attack as he worked to promote the cause of peace, may be added to the long list of those who have been the victims in Afghanistan of the most reprehensible intolerance.

We also deplore the flagrant violation of international law and of the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic Relations and on Consular Relations: the occupation by the Taliban of the Consulate-General of the Islamic Republic of Iran at Mazar-e-Sharif. France is gravely concerned at the disappearance of staff members of the Consulate-General and of several other Iranian nationals, and we join in the urgent appeals to the factions, and in particular to the Taliban, to locate these diplomats.

The conditions that prevail in Afghanistan, and in particular the position of the Taliban, have caused the departure from Kabul of non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and other international humanitarian organizations. This could lead in coming months to a further exacerbation of the humanitarian situation and of the fate of the Afghan people. Responsibility for this state of affairs lies with those who in Afghanistan have increasingly taken measures that flout fundamental human rights, and in particular the rights of women and girls; with those who have rejected the application of principles set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; with those who have imposed increased constraints upon humanitarian activities and who have deliberately undermined international humanitarian law.

Although everything must be done to facilitate the return to Afghanistan, in conditions of security, of the international organizations and the non-governmental organizations in order to ease the suffering of the civilian population, we consider it to be of paramount importance that the United Nations and the international community not compromise on the question of respect for universally accepted principles.

We cannot fail once again to demand — as does the draft resolution on which the Council will be voting today — that the Afghan factions cease harbouring and training terrorists and their organizations, and that they put an end to the trafficking in illicit drugs.

The French delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution because it expresses the determination of the Security Council, in keeping with its Charter responsibilities, to consider all other measures that might be necessary for the implementation of the draft resolution, and to restore peace, stability and full respect for human rights and international norms in Afghanistan.

Mr. Dahlgren (Sweden): Let me first say that I fully associate myself with the statement made earlier today by the representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union.

More than 19 years of warfare has not brought the Afghan conflict or the suffering of the Afghan people closer to an end. On the contrary, the continued and escalated fighting poses serious and growing threats to international peace and security and has caused extensive human suffering, large-scale material destruction, and refugee flows and other forcible displacements of large numbers of people. The conflict also provides fertile ground for terrorism and illegal drug production and trafficking, with repercussions far outside Afghanistan's own borders.

The Afghan conflict has no military solution. Only a political settlement accommodating the rights and interests of all Afghan ethnic, religious and political groups can provide the basis for a durable solution to the conflict. That is also how the necessary conditions can be created for the much needed reconstruction and development of Afghan society. The draft resolution before us demands that all Afghan factions stop fighting, resume negotiations without delay or preconditions, and cooperate with the aim of creating a broad-based and fully representative government which would protect the rights of all Afghans and would observe the international obligations of Afghanistan. We fully support that demand.

The Afghan conflict continues to be fuelled by arms, ammunition and other military supplies from abroad, as well as by the apparent involvement of foreign military personnel. As the Secretary-General has stated, the key to ending the Afghan tragedy lies in whether or not the international community has the resolve to address its external aspects. Foreign interference has to end. The regional Powers need to talk to each other and build mutual confidence. Only then can the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General, his Special Envoy and the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan to facilitate a peaceful solution bear fruit. The draft resolution before us calls upon all States neighbouring Afghanistan and other States with influence in that country to intensify their efforts under the auspices of the United Nations to bring the parties to a negotiated settlement. We firmly support that call.

My country remains greatly concerned at the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. All parties to the conflict must comply fully with their obligations under international humanitarian law. They must take full responsibility for the safety and security of all international and humanitarian personnel, and must ensure safe and unhindered access. Impeding the delivery of humanitarian assistance and using this obstruction as a weapon against the civilian population is a violation of international law. Of equal concern to us are the continued violations of human rights, and especially the discrimination against Afghan girls and women.

For many years, Sweden has been one of the largest donors of humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people. We are ready to continue this assistance when conditions on the ground make that possible. The decision by the Taliban authorities to close the offices of international non-governmental organizations in Kabul, and other restrictions on access, have forced the suspension of assistance, with grave consequences for the population of Kabul itself and beyond. Sweden fully supports further efforts by the Secretary-General and his representatives to reach an agreement with the Taliban in order to make possible the continued delivery of necessary humanitarian aid.

Sweden will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us.

Mr. Buallay (Bahrain) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation has stressed on many previous occasions the need to resolve the Afghan crisis through dialogue, peaceful means and direct negotiations between all Afghan factions. Escalation, hostilities and resort to force are not the means to resolve that crisis. In this context, we call on all Afghan factions to cease hostilities, to return to the negotiating table and to cooperate in order to reach a comprehensive solution and a durable peace in Afghanistan. We also call on the international community and the States with influence in Afghanistan to intensify their efforts, in cooperation with the United Nations, in order to help the parties reach a peaceful settlement through negotiation.

My delegation reaffirms its full support for the efforts made by the United Nations — as represented by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan — as well as for the activities of the United Nations Special Mission in Afghanistan, to facilitate the peace process aimed at obtaining the objectives of national reconciliation and a durable settlement in Afghanistan.

In this context, my delegation appeals to all States, the programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations and other international organizations to resume providing humanitarian assistance to all those in need in Afghanistan as soon as security conditions permit. We affirm the need to guarantee the safety and security of the personnel of international organizations working for the Afghan people and for peace in the country.

Proceeding from the State of Bahrain's belief in the need to settle political crises through dialogue, direct negotiations and refraining from military force — which can only increase tensions — my delegation will support the draft resolution before the Council today, with the understanding that the interpretation of the last preambular paragraph and the operative paragraph 14 does not prejudice Islamic shariah.

Mr. Sáenz Biolley (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The almost interminable conflict in Afghanistan is once again a cause of outrage and concern for all of us. The disillusionment and frustration that resound from time to time in international forums and meetings have taken on new meaning today. That is why my delegation would like take this opportunity to state the following.

It is inconceivable that small armed bands have plunged this country and the vast majority of its population into an abject state of near-barbarism and that they persecute the population for ethnic or religious reasons.

It is unacceptable for the intolerance of a faction to have brought about the suffering of almost 2.5 million refugees and a similar number of internally displaced persons.

It is intolerable as well for the Taliban faction to violate the human rights of the population — in particular the rights of women and girls — and that they attempt to justify this with the argument of cultural and traditional mores.

It is equally unacceptable for the work of international humanitarian organizations to be thwarted, which condemns the civilian population to greater suffering.

It is deeply alarming that there are still more than 10,000 undetonated anti-personnel mines, which place the lives and safety of the majority of the population at great risk.

It is also unacceptable that international illegal narcotics trafficking is used and promoted to finance the armed struggle and to bring suffering to the people, and that the historical and cultural heritage of the Afghan people is being destroyed to enrich small groups of traffickers.

We are alarmed by that groups of extremists have forced the innocent population to live in degrading conditions and that, in this context, one fourth of the children die before the age of five.

It is unforgivable for women and girls to be denied access to minimal health and education services.

It is intolerable for fundamental principles of international humanitarian law to be violated, that minimal protection is not provided to civilians and non-combatants and that people are forcibly displaced for ethnic or religious reasons.

Furthermore, it is intolerable under any circumstances for United Nations officials to be murdered in cold blood and for the lives and security of United Nations staff and the diplomatic and consular corps to be endangered.

It is alarming that neighbouring countries and countries with influence on the parties are contributing to the conflict rather than seeking a peaceful solution and that there are clear signs of foreign military intervention in the country, in conspicuous violation of that country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

It is unacceptable for the parties to refuse to negotiate a peaceful resolution of the conflict and to attempt to create delays or set conditions on these negotiations. This situation, which is so clearly in violation of the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations, would automatically call for the application of Article 6 of the Charter if it were brought about by a recognized Government.

Costa Rica will be fully prepared to consider the necessary measures to encourage the parties to the Afghan conflict, in particular the Taliban, to respect the minimum standards of human rights and humanitarian international law and to motivate them to find a peaceful resolution of the conflict, as is set out in the draft resolution before us.

For all of these reasons, my delegation has co-sponsored the draft resolution we are considering today and will vote in favour of it. We share the international community's justified distress and concern over the situation prevailing in Afghanistan. We hope that once and for all the Afghan factions will now be rational and sensible and will pursue a civilized dialogue to settle the conflict that is tearing Afghanistan apart.

Mr. Amorim (Brazil): Afghanistan has been afflicted by the scourge of war for almost 20 years. During this period the image of peace seemed to appear on the horizon many times but proved to be just a mirage.

A crossroads of civilizations, Afghanistan has seen many would-be conquerors. In their long history, the Afghans have always shown a deep attachment to their freedom and a profound distaste for foreign interference

in their affairs. Afghanistan is thus key to the peace and stability of a region of unique strategic importance to the rest of the world.

In the draft resolution we are about to adopt, the Security Council reaffirms its commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan, as well as its respect for its cultural and historical heritage.

The preservation of the extraordinary diversity which characterizes Afghanistan, and which is reflected in the various expressions of Islamic and other faiths and in a mosaic of ethnic and linguistic communities with close links with other peoples of South and Central Asia, is a necessary condition for a durable peace.

The United Nations has had an important role in helping the Afghan people in this period of conflict. The Organization has acted in an impartial way in the fulfilment of its political mandate, promoting the dialogue among the six neighbours and other interested countries. The United Nations, in cooperation with other organizations, has been instrumental in the provision of much-needed humanitarian assistance.

In order to allow for the return of normalcy to Afghanistan, it is necessary that the Afghan parties re-initiate a process of political negotiation. Both the Government of President Rabbani and the Taliban authorities have a responsibility to work in that direction. It is also necessary that human rights be respected, including the rights of girls and women.

All outside interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan should cease immediately, particularly the presence of foreign military personnel.

The return of the United Nations, in conditions of security, should facilitate the investigation into the alleged massacres. This would be an important step in establishing the facts and bringing justice to that country. Afghanistan should also join the efforts of the international community to combat terrorism and drug trafficking.

No political movement, no matter how much territory it controls, will gain international respectability as long as it is perceived as harbouring terrorist activities. It is also necessary that those in a position of authority ensure the observance of international law, in particular their obligations under the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic and Consular Relations and the Geneva Conventions. The officers of the Consulate-General of Iran, who are being held hostage, should be freed immediately.

We should like also to refer in particular to paragraph 6 of the draft resolution, which condemns the attacks on the United Nations personnel in the Taliban-held territories of Afghanistan, including the killing of two Afghan staff members of the World Food Programme and of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Jalalabad, and of the Military Adviser to the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan in Kabul.

The draft resolution we have before us, in favour of which Brazil will vote, represents a call from the international community to the Afghans to renounce any form of violence and settle their differences through negotiation.

Mr. Touray (Gambia): The situation in Afghanistan is of grave concern to my delegation. The recent re-emergence of hostilities in the northern region of the country poses a serious and growing threat to the already fragile peace and security situation in the region. Those offensives are further exacerbated by the increasingly ethnic and sectarian nature of the conflict, resulting in an increase in refugee flows, the forcible displacement of persons and wanton destruction, thus exacerbating the misery and sorrow of an already despondent society.

My delegation was extremely disappointed when we learnt of the capture of the Consulate-General of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We vehemently condemn this act of blatant disregard for international law. We join others in demanding that all parties to the conflict do everything possible to ensure the safe and dignified passage out of Afghanistan of the personnel of the Consulate-General and other Iranian nationals missing in Afghanistan.

Another matter of grave concern to my delegation is the attacks on United Nations personnel. We condemn those acts and join others in calling on the Taliban to investigate them and bring those responsible for these heinous crimes to justice. We also demand that the parties to the conflict do everything possible to ensure the security of United Nations personnel and of international and other humanitarian workers.

The war in Afghanistan is very fluid and for that reason we believe that there is no military solution to this extremely complex conflict. The international community

has expended a lot of resources, time and energy to help the Afghan factions out of this undesirable situation, but the factions remain stubborn. The belligerents must realize that the patience of the international community will soon run out.

In this context, we take this opportunity to call on all the factions to lay down their arms and return to the negotiating table. We believe that with a firm commitment among the factions and with the assistance of the United Nations, a negotiated settlement accommodating the interests of all the Afghan factions can be reached.

My delegation has studied the draft resolution before us. We believe that it is a very balanced one. It states in no uncertain terms the demands and position of the international community. We are in support of it and will vote in its favour.

Mr. Minton (United States of America): The United States emphasizes that no faction in Afghanistan can impose its will on the entire country through military action. A lasting settlement can be achieved only by establishing a representative and broad-based multi-ethnic Government that can effectively govern and honour Afghanistan's international obligations. We take this opportunity to again urge the Afghan factions to work with the United Nations and Special Representative Brahimi to reach this goal.

The factions should also facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid by the United Nations and non-governmental organizations to all in need, and work to protect the human rights of all Afghans. We are particularly concerned about the women and girls of Afghanistan, who are subject to systematic discrimination and repression. We call upon the factions to respect internationally accepted norms of behaviour in this matter.

As President Clinton has said, terrorism is one of the greatest dangers we face in this new global era. We once again urge the Afghan factions to cease all assistance to terrorists, including providing sanctuary, and to expel them from Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's neighbours should not interfere in that country. In particular, they should not take any actions that could further enlarge or inflame the conflict at this critical time. The United States supports the territorial integrity of Afghanistan and of all of its neighbours. We call on all Afghan parties and all of Afghanistan's neighbours to respect its borders.

We too deplore the tragic deaths of international personnel working in Afghanistan. We extend our deepest condolences to the families of the victims of these crimes and call for efforts to bring those responsible to speedy justice.

The United States is also aware of reports that several Iranians, including diplomatic staff of the Iranian Consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif, have been missing since the Taliban captured that city. While we cannot confirm these reports, we remind the Afghan factions that the holding of diplomats for any reason and at any time is unacceptable, given their special protected status under international law.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Slovenia.

We are gravely concerned about the recent resumption of large-scale fighting in Afghanistan, which is again taking a high toll on the country and its people. However, despite the immense suffering and destruction caused during all the years of fighting, the parties still seem determined to pursue the military option and are not prepared to engage in a serious dialogue to find a peaceful solution to the conflict.

The situation in Afghanistan has the potential to escalate, with an alarming destabilizing effect on the region as a whole. That threat includes both military and non-military aspects, including drug trafficking and the harbouring and training of terrorists.

The illusion of a quick military victory on one side could lead to a protracted military and ethnic conflict. The only way to resolve the situation in Afghanistan is to stop the fighting, resume negotiations and work towards the establishment of a broad-based Government and national reconciliation.

The role of the international community, and of the United Nations in particular, is important. In order to make peacemaking efforts more effective, the United Nations needs to offer a coherent approach to the problem. For that to become possible, full cooperation by the countries with influence in Afghanistan, especially those neighbouring it, is crucial.

Full cooperation with the United Nations means, first and foremost, that foreign military interference in Afghanistan has to cease. Foreign interference in the form of active political or military support, including

foreign military personnel, is one of the main obstacles to the efforts for peace in Afghanistan. The appropriate solutions should be found to curb the flow of arms and other supplies to the warring factions.

Security conditions for United Nations and humanitarian personnel have been deteriorating for some time now and have finally resulted in the relocation of the United Nations international staff from Afghanistan. We strongly condemn the killing of an Italian national — the Military Adviser to the United Nations Special Mission in Kabul — and of the two Afghan staff members of the World Food Programme and of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Jalalabad. We expect that a full investigation into these crimes will be conducted.

We would like to express our deep concern at the fate of the personnel of the Iranian Consulate-General in Mazar-e-Sharif and of the other Iranian nationals who have been missing since the Taliban captured the city. We call upon the parties, in particular the Taliban, to respect their diplomatic status and the provisions of the Vienna Conventions and to secure their safe passage out of Afghanistan.

We call upon the parties to respect humanitarian law and human rights. We are particularly concerned at the reports of ethnic and religious persecution, impediments to the work of international humanitarian organizations and the displacement of innocent civilians. We would like to reiterate our concern at discrimination against girls and women and urge the Taliban to recognize and protect their rights in accordance with international human rights standards.

We believe that this is an appropriate time for the Security Council to make a firm pronouncement on the situation in Afghanistan.

Slovenia co-sponsored the draft resolution submitted for action today and shall vote in favour of it.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

It is my understanding that the Security Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution (S/1998/810) before it. If I hear no objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bahrain, Brazil, China, Costa Rica, France, Gabon, Gambia, Japan, Kenya, Portugal, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1193 (1998).

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.